



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Fifth Sunday of Easter (B) – 1 John 4:7-21

Focus: *God is Love*

word of life

“Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.” 1 John 4:11 (NRSV)

Read 1 John 4:7-21

The First Letter of John has only five chapters but overflows with a theme of love. This passage from 1 John 4 is often read at weddings.

1. Which (if any) verses of this passage sound familiar?
2. How would you summarize this passage?

Everything begins with God’s love, because God is love. From that love, we learn how to love others. The Gospel writer John puts it like this, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” (John 3:16 NRSV) God acted in Jesus Christ out of a love beyond our human comprehension.

The core is not our human love and limited response of love towards God and others, but rather the love generated and extended by God. We are God’s beloved, recipients of love. God acts, and thus therefore we respond with a life of love.

3. When did you realize you are God’s beloved?
4. What does it mean for you to know you were God’s beloved?

One verse sums it up, “Beloved, since God loves us so much, we also ought to love one another.” (1 John 4:11 NRSV) There is nothing to debate. As we discover God’s love for us and the world, we increase our capacity to love. We love others, not because they are worthy of our love and adoration. We love simply because we have been loved by God. We love purely because God is at work in our lives.

5. How does God’s love transform us into lovers?
6. What prevents us from loving?

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.” (1 John 4:18 NRSV) Take a moment to reflect on the role of fear in relationships. Many times we do not enter into or stay in relationships because of fear—we fear getting hurt, having to say goodbye, and the list goes on.

7. How does fear interfere with love?
8. What often is the root of fear in our lives?

“Perfect love casts out fear.” (1 John 4:18 NRSV) Perfect love comes from God alone. If God is the source of love, then what need we fear? Who can hurt us? Just look at Jesus facing Pilate, the soldiers who crucify him, and death itself. He continues to love throughout it all. When the perfect love of God touches our lives, there is no room for hatred of others. There is no room. Love pushes out hatred, fear, and resentment. Love triumphs. Alleluia!

9. What does it mean to say “perfect love casts out fear”?

word among us

There is a well-known story of the preacher who preached a one-word sermon. He slowly walked to the pulpit, opened up his sermon notes, and proclaimed, “Love!” and sat down. Those in the congregation did not know what to do. You could hear rustling of paper. Finally, the organist began to play a hymn.

The next week, the preacher rose to the pulpit and proclaimed, “Love!” and sat down. This time, someone boldly yelled out, “You told us that last week.” The preacher stood and solemnly said, “I know. Now start doing it!”

1. *What is your reaction to this story?*
2. *What was the point of the preacher?*
3. *How would that sermon be received at your congregation?*

The simple phrase, “Beloved, let us love one another. . .” (1 John 4:7 NRSV) contains both a claim on our identity as well as a tender plea for Christians who are so loved by God as shown in Christ to extend that love to others. It is so simple, but somehow we as humans complicate things. But in reality, love is a gift as well as an expectation for the Christian.

4. *Which do you find easier: to receive God’s love or to love others? Explain your answer.*
5. *What is so complicated about loving others?*
6. *How important is it to experience being loved before we extend love to others?*

Take a moment to reflect on perfect love as described in 1 John 4:17-18 being perfected in us. We who have been made imperfect have a capacity for perfect love.

7. *How is love perfected in us?*
8. *What would our lives be like if we who are imperfect could obtain perfect love?*

faith practice in daily life

Strive for justice and peace in all the earth

There is no room for hatred in the life of a Christian. Perhaps that statement needs clarification. Christians can hate sin, greed, policies which discriminate, as well as all those things which limit and exclude people from becoming who God has created them to be. We hate that which draws us away from God’s love.

As we consider ways to practice our faith in daily life, ponder the ways love might shape and determine our choices.

9. *How might God’s love for us stir us to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?*

Prayer

God of love, thank you for your love. Words cannot express what it means to be claimed by you in our baptism. Set us free us from fear and allow your love to grow in our lives. Amen

last word

Open your palms and arms upward.
Pray for God to set you free to love.